

1. I read an advertisement in the newspaper for a company that says that they can help me get a green card—how do I know if this is a scam?

Registration for the 2008 Green Card/Diversity Visa Lottery closed in December 2006 and applications are not currently being accepted. Registration for the 2009 lottery will not begin until October or November 2007. Applications can only be submitted online, and *there is no charge for this service—registration is free*. When the time comes for the lottery registration to begin again, we will issue press releases and post statements on our website in English and in Georgian at: <http://georgia.usembassy.gov/visas.html>. Please remember that there are never any guarantees in the Diversity Visa lottery, and anyone who tells you otherwise may be trying to mislead you.

2. Can an American citizen spouse accompany a nonimmigrant visa applicant to his/her interview?

Unfortunately, no. American citizens and permanent residents are not permitted to accompany relatives to a non-immigrant visa interview under any circumstances. All applicants must qualify for a visa based on their own personal circumstances, not the circumstances of their relatives in the United States.

3. Can I call the consular section to reschedule my visa appointment?

No. All appointments are scheduled through the number provided in the application instructions at the time you pay your application fee at TBC Bank. If you miss your appointment, you may call the same telephone number to reschedule for no additional charge. The waiting time to get a visa appointment in Tbilisi averages only one week; you are personally responsible for making sure that you plan ahead and get your appointment in time for your scheduled trip.

Additionally, we do not encourage anyone to purchase tickets before they have physically received their visa. Unexpected delays and processing requirements—which sometimes can happen after the visa application is approved by the consular officer—may delay the issuance of your visa; travel is expensive and, as you are responsible for any costs associated with changing travel plans or tickets, we wish to help prevent any unnecessary expenses for you. Therefore, we recommend that you wait until you have received your visa before you purchase your tickets.

4. I have a mother and a sister who are staying in the U.S. illegally. What are my chances of receiving a tourist visa in case if I can prove that I have strong ties to Georgia? Would it be better if I didn't write about them on the visa application?

This is a difficult situation, but you are always better off if you tell the truth on the application and during the interview. While the fact that your close family is in America without proper status may affect your application, if you can demonstrate to the consul

that you have strong ties to Georgia this can be overcome. However, when the interviewing officer discovers that an applicant is not telling the truth, this is almost certainly going to result in a refusal. Furthermore, presenting false information (such as job or income data) or hiding important true information (like having been arrested) can mean that an applicant is banned from entering the USA—permanently. You will always be better off being completely honest with the consular officer.

5. I provided all the necessary documents sent from my relative in U.S. proving that he has sufficient funds to sponsor my trip to U.S., but I was still refused. Why??

The United States is an open society. Unlike many other countries, the United States does not impose internal controls on most visitors, such as registration with local authorities. In order to enjoy the privilege of unencumbered travel in the United States, aliens have a responsibility to prove they are going to return abroad before a visitor or student visa is issued. Our immigration law requires consular officers to view every visa applicant as an intending immigrant until the applicant proves otherwise.

To qualify for a visitor or student visa, an applicant must demonstrate convincingly to a consular officer that they have a residence overseas that they have no intention of abandoning—in short, that they will return to their home after their travel to the United States within a reasonable time frame. This is the most frequent basis for visa refusals. Applicants prove the existence of such residence by demonstrating that they have ties abroad that would compel them to leave the U.S. at the end of the temporary stay. The law places this burden of proof on the applicant.

Our consular officers have a difficult job. They must decide in a very short time if someone is qualified to receive a temporary visa. Most cases are decided after a brief interview and review of whatever evidence of ties an applicant presents.

If your application is refused, you will be provided a letter by the consular officer stating under which section of the law your visa was refused. If you were unable to convince the consular officer of your ties to your home country, we do not recommend that you reapply right away unless you have *compelling* new evidence about your situation in your home country that you did not present at the time of your last application. We do recognize that a person's situation can change from year to year—but it is very unlikely that a person's personal circumstances would change enough to qualify them for a visa in a short space of time.

6. As I permanently wear glasses do I still need to submit a photo without one?

Yes. We cannot accept photos with glasses, even if you wear them all the time. If you appear for your interview with a photo with glasses, processing of your case will be suspended and you will be asked to come back on a different day, which will significantly delay your visa application.

7. How long can a green card holder stay outside the United States?

Legal Permanent Residents (Green Card holders) may leave and reenter the U.S. freely; they do not need an additional visa. However, Green Card holders are expected to live permanently in the United States. A Permanent Resident who stays outside the U.S. for 365 days or moves permanently to another country loses legal status in the U.S. and must be sponsored again before returning to the U.S.

Permanent Residents who need to stay outside the U.S. due to work, school or other commitments should apply for a reentry permit from the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services *before* leaving the U.S.

For more information see: <http://uscis.gov/graphics/services/Emergency/index.htm>.